

# Christian Communicators of the Southeast

## FINDING A GREAT PERSUASIVE TOPIC

Pick something you feel strongly about. If you do not feel strongly about your topic, how are you going to persuade the audience to feel the same way? Students sometimes say, "But I don't feel strongly about anything!" Yes, you do. Sit down with a piece of paper and brainstorm. If you like baseball, give a speech for or against salary caps. If you like county music, give a speech on why county music is not as simplistic or sappy as many people think. You get the idea.

Avoid your "hot button" topics--something you feel **too** strongly about. Hot button topics are issues you feel so strongly about that it is hard for you to understand where the other side is coming from. In order to understand why others have not yet embraced your opinion or perspective you need to understand the other point of view.

Pick something controversial. It does not have to be extremely controversial, but you do need to present a topic that not everyone agrees with. Otherwise it will not be a very engaging or persuasive speech. For example, do not give a speech on why smoking is bad for your health; who is going to disagree with that? Instead, try giving a speech for or against a county-wide smoking ban.

Avoid "tired topics" that students pick all the time and that your judges have heard over and over again. Yawn. Be creative. Here is a list of tired speaking topics that you probably want to avoid:

- Health care reform.
- Illegal immigration.
- Homeschooling.
- Abolishing abortion.

There is nothing wrong with advocating for a controversial topic, but these have been overused big time.

Pick a current event. Having trouble thinking of a topic? Go read some blogs, *The Economist* or *World Magazine*. What's going on in the world? If there is an election, endorse a candidate or a ballot referendum.

Are there ideas, causes or issues that people need to ponder or take action on, but most people rarely do? Wake up some passion in your audience with an issue with daily relevance to them.

Talk about cell phone use in public, or music downloads, tax holidays, or something the audience cares about. If they do not care about your issue, they will not be interested in understanding why you care about it.

Pick a smaller part of a big issue. Do not try to change people's minds about a huge issue in your short speech, because you cannot. Do you really think you can change someone's mind about the Iraq war in a 6-8 minute speech? Of course not. However, you might persuade them to change their thinking about a portion of this issue, such as the timing of troop withdrawals.

Here is a tip about finding a great topic: have fun. Find speech topics and essay topics that you would enjoy working with. It is much easier to engage your judges' interests if you are advocating for an idea, product, person or issue that truly interests you!

Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

### POPULAR CULTURE TOPICS

Reality television as a positive or negative cultural phenomenon  
Makeover shows  
Disney films  
Illegal music downloading

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Role-playing games (RPGs)  
Violence in movies  
Television, movie, music, or video game ratings  
Twitter and Facebook as a cultural phenomenon  
The effect of cell phone use on society  
The effect of iPods on society  
The amount of television and other media used by children  
Advertising in the public schools  
Advertising that targets children  
Alcohol or cigarette advertising  
Requirements for children's educational programming  
Public radio/public television  
Halloween

## SPORTS TOPICS

Salary caps for professional athletes  
Sports and steroid use  
Funding issues for women's sports  
Publicity for women's sports  
Professional athletic strikes  
Drafting of athletes out of high school  
The rising price of tickets to professional games  
Public funding of professional stadiums  
Academic expectations of college athletes  
College sports recruitment practices  
The benefit of team sports to children  
Athletes as role models  
Violence and sports (hockey, boxing, etc.)  
The commercialization of sports  
Youth athletic participation in sports like gymnastics and figure skating

## PEOPLE

President Donald Trump  
My unforgettable grandparent  
Mother Theresa  
Missionary heroes  
Pope John Paul  
World's Best Musical Composer  
Bible heroes of the faith